



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

January 28, 2002

The Honorable Pat Thibaudeau, Chair
Health and Long-Term Care Committee
Washington State Senate
414 John A. Cherberg Building
Post Office Box 40443
Olympia, Washington 98504-0443

Dear Madam Chair,

As chairs of the Washington State Board of Health committees on Environmental Health and Children's Health and Well-Being, we are writing to support the concepts and goals of Senate Bill 6356, which seeks to focus, elevate and advise on children's environmental health and protection. The Board agrees with the bill's focus on children as the most vulnerable to environmental hazards, and on communities of color as being at disproportionate risk for environmental exposures.

The goals of the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council would overlap with the Board's past and present priority work areas: children's health and well-being, environmental health, environmental justice, and health disparities. The council's work would fit well with the Board's work to improve interagency coordination and communication, and with its charge to work with other agencies, organizations, the public, and public health and health care professionals to improve environmental health rules and regulations. As a convener of public forums and producer of reports on children's health and well-being, environmental justice, and health disparities, the Board plays an important role in disseminating information to the public.

We do have concerns, however, about the children's health advisory council's membership as listed in SB 6356. There is no mention of environmental health practitioners, such as local health district environmental health directors, and others responsible for state and local environmental health programs. Environmental health practitioners enforce environmental health rules and regulations, and play a key role in reducing children's exposures to environmental hazards in communities. There is also no reference to the State Board of Health's participation in the council, even though the Board plays a role in developing children's and environmental health policy, approves many environmental health rules, and provides a link between environmental health policy and practice.

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The State Board of Health looks forward to any role the Legislature might ask it to play in the development of children's environmental health policy. Improving children's environmental health is vital to the future of all of Washington's communities.

Sincerely,

Carl Osaki, R.S., M.S.P.H.
Chair, Environmental Health Committee

Vickie Ybarra, R.N., M.P.H.
Chair, Children's Health and Well-Being
Committee

cc: Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee Members
Ms. Ree Sailors, Governor's Office of Health Policy
Mr. Bill White, Department of Health
Ms. Patty Hayes, Department of Health
Washington State Board of Health Members
Don Sloma, State Board of Health